

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COALITION ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF TAX CREDIT AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Spokane, WA –The Earned Income Tax Credit Coalition of Spokane, formed to educate Spokane's low and moderate-income community about the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit, officially announced today the launch of their awareness campaign.

Spurred by information from an independent analysis of tax returns from Spokane zip codes that showed unclaimed refundable tax credits of \$10 million in 2002, the coalition began work on their awareness campaign last summer. The campaign's outreach campaign includes flyers distributed through churches, schools, social service agencies, local businesses and utility mailings, in addition to articles in local publications and on-air interviews with the media.

"Last year's outreach effort assisted in \$31 million in refunds being claimed by our community. While that is considered a success by any measure, we left another \$10 million on the table, " said Mayor John Powers. "We want to ensure that all workers in our community are aware of this program and that they have the tools and resources to access these credits that can help supplement family incomes."

"As advocates for the City's low to moderate income workers, this group is committed to get this benefit to the families who need it most," stated Molly Popchock, ESL Coordinator at the Adult Basic Education Division of the Institute for Extended Learning. "Our organization is involved because we have seen EITC work for our students/clients, providing them a leg up on the ladder to self-sufficiency."

An important aspect of the campaign includes **free** tax preparation services at a number of sites throughout Spokane beginning the first weekend of February. AARP Tax-Aide, the nation's largest courtesy, volunteer-run tax counseling and preparation service offered to all low to middle-income taxpayers, will be hosting over 20 sites. Bi-lingual tax aide assistance will also be available at some sites.

For more information on site locations, dates and times, call 1.888.227.7669, or visit www.aarp.org/taxaide. The Tax-Aide Site Location and Schedule is also attached to this media release.

"We have been truly amazed at the outpouring of volunteers and resource commitments for this campaign. We have local businesses providing the printing of flyers, sponsoring greeters at the Tax-Aide sites and offering equipment," said Michael O'Connor of Consumer Credit Counseling Service. "This is a perfect example of a concerted community-based effort.

"The tax refunds can be used to help pay off holiday bills or nagging debt, or even help jumpstart a savings account to prepare for future emergency expenses," Michael added.

A media briefing is planned for February 3, 2003, at Consumer Credit Counseling Service, 1912 North Division. Members of the coalition will be present to discuss this initiative.

For individuals interested in determining whether they qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit, please call the EITC Hotline at 1.800.755.5317, 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

Eligibility requirements include:

- Single or married workers who worked part-time or full-time in 2002
- Maximum eligible incomes are:
 - Workers with no children and income less than \$12,060 can receive a credit up to \$376.
 - Workers with one child and income less than \$30,201 can receive a credit up to \$2,506.
 - Workers with two or more children and income less than \$34,178 can receive a credit up to \$4,140.

In addition, the Child Tax Credit allows a credit of \$600 per child.

Taxpayers should bring Social Security numbers and all W-2, 1098 and 1099 forms, records of other income, deductions and credits and a copy of their 2001 tax return, if available.

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Coalition of Spokane includes members from:

Community Colleges of Spokane
Employment Security Worksource Spokane
EWU Accounting Club
Spokane Regional Health District
Regional Chamber of Commerce
DSHS/Community Services Division
Economic Development Council
Metropolitan Mortgage & Securities Co., Inc.
Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)
Spokane Neighborhood Action Program (SNAP)
Consumer Credit Counseling Services
East Central Neighborhood Council
Support for Parents Overcoming Challenges (SPOC)

Career Path Services.
Avista Corporation
YWCA
V.O.I.C.E.S.
Merrill Lynch
Whitworth College
Spokane Alliance
Gonzaga University
AARP/Tax-Aide
Cancer Patient Care
Spokane Housing - HUD
One Spokane
City of Spokane

Enclosures: Common Questions about the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
Tax-Aide Site Locations & Schedule – 2003
EITC Fact Sheet TY2002

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